

The Romance of Soldiering
and Sport *By General*
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definite plans, but I replied that I would begin by landing at the first really good game-looking halting-place, and that I should then trust to Allah. He smiled almost pityingly, but when I happened to meet him again a month later, it was my turn to smile at him from behind my first rhinoceros and buffalo horns.

On arrival at a place called Mungledye Ghat I bundled my very meagre amount of kit out of the boat, and she steamed away. A few minutes later I found myself and my servant almost the sole occupants of the place. Around us waved impenetrable reed jungle; at our feet flowed the sacred river, and over us was a silence that could be felt.

Shouldering my rifle I started for the civil station which I understood was a few miles distant, and *en route* I met a planter who gave me a lift in his trap; I called on Mr. A. J. Primrose, of the Indian Civil Service, the Deputy Commissioner, and was at once set on my legs. He was so pleased to find anyone who could start shooting in such a happy-go-lucky way, that he arranged a trip for me to last a fortnight, and lent me two elephants and his trackers.

I have never felt happier than when I found myself in those wondrous jungles, seated high on my "Hati"; the wild grass, topped with white, waved on every side just like a sea ruffled by a breeze; an occasional rush below told of some wild beast dashing away from us, and the romance of it all was fascinating. I suppose each of us has a hobby; give me the jungle, a rifle, a fishing-rod and Nature unspoiled by man, and I could do without most of the other distractions of life.

The natives of the first village I halted at were much amused because I pitched no camp and possessed no bed, but just lay down on my blankets. Accustomed to seeing the white man with tents and other comforts, they were not quite decided as to whether I was a fraud or a crank. They found next day that at least I was not a fraud.

I am not going to bore the reader with tales of slaughter, nor with the measurements of tigers and horns, etc., but I had the good fortune in my shooting days to experience some uncommon thrills, and these may prove of interest,

Assam and the Sudan

even to those who have grown tired of reading *shikar* stories. My first day was to be a red-letter one, and it began by my mahout (elephant driver) telling me that his elephant would face anything but a rhinoceros. Now this was disconcerting, as the villagers reported that an old rhino had been seen within half a mile of the camp. However, he added that a large glass of whisky administered to him (the mahout) before starting was the safest antidote to the elephant's cowardly nature. Whisky and opium, I afterwards found, were absolute necessities with him, and greatly helped in the case of all other Assamese *shikaris* I came across. The spirit was consumed and we were soon on the tracks of the rhino.

Presently I saw a great black mass fifteen yards ahead of me, buried as it were in the dense grass. I was a beginner, so fired two barrels from my 12-bore. Lilpoo turned the elephant, and at racing speed we travelled in an opposite direction. Nothing but a bit of personal violence could induce him to stop, which he did at last, when a second liberal ration of whisky had the effect of once again getting in touch with the rhino. Slowly we advanced, and I spotted him facing me at a few yards. *Bang, bang*; two more barrels into him were followed by a mighty rush just past me, which allowed of my planting still two more bullets in his epidermis. I now knew he had six in him, but I was only just learning that hurried shots from one of the old-fashioned 12-bore black powder rifles was of about as much use against a rhino as a mountain-gun would be against a concrete fort.

For two hours we tracked him by blood trails; then, without the slightest warning, he charged straight on us; there was no time now for Lilpoo to turn, and the rhino came crash into us. The elephant lowered his head and heeled over to such an extent that I was nearly thrown out of the howdah. Seizing the elephant under the soft part of the neck, the rhino held on; whilst lowering my rifle I gave him yet two more bullets with the muzzle almost touching his spine. He rolled over, and the elephant, finding himself free, started off across country.

I made sure that the rhino was finished; but in all my

The Romance of Soldiering and Sport

experience I never met a more undefeatable beast, for hardly had I reloaded than he was behind us at his top speed. At this moment I heard a report, and found one of the howdah ropes had snapped and that I was in imminent danger of ending my days as pulp; but the business brooked no delay, and once more the useless 12-bore belched its contents into the rhino, which stopped him. Presently we emerged into a fairly open space and took counsel. Lilpoo practically refused to go into the jungle again, so I decided to try the other elephant, and had just mounted when, to my astonished gaze, my gallant rhino once more, and for the last time, emerged from his high grass. In a moment all was confusion; but even if the sadly wounded beast had not turned and tried to run away, my mahouts were quite decided as to their course, and that was to clear out at any price. I was obliged to return to camp, but the rhino was found dead at dawn next morning. My joy at killing him was somewhat marred by the thought of all the pain I had caused, but it was from ignorance alone, and we had had a most exciting day. A few days later I came on a panther asleep over a kill and shot him before he had time to run.

After this trip I bought a double hammerless 8-bore rifle; it was a heavy gun to carry, but I seldom lost anything I hit with it; and years later still I used a double .400 high velocity. Ever since those days I have stuck to Holland and Holland for guns and rifles.

I finished up my Assam trip by crossing to the south bank of the Brahmapootra, where I met Captain Lamb, of the South Lancashire Regiment, then one of the best (if not champion) shots of the Army. He was shooting with his father, a Deputy Commissioner in Assam, and we got some good sport. He told me a story which is probably almost unique. Whilst shooting with a friend in those parts a tiger, frightened by the elephants, ran across some fields and disappeared in one of the clumps of big trees which dot the enormous rice swamps of Assam. The elephants at once headed for this and cautiously surrounded it. But although every effort was made, nothing would move the

Assam and the Sudan

but wished to accompany me from Golaghat to Kohima, about 100 miles. I arranged to do the journey in three stages, and accordingly sent on supplies, etc. These were carried in a light hospital hammock slung on poles, and I had picked men for the work. The second day, whilst we were riding alongside, first one and then two men said they felt ill and could go no farther. Shortly afterwards one of them began to roll on the ground and to show symptoms of cholera. Night was coming on, and we still had some miles to travel; we had no medicines, but poured brandy down the man's throat. As is the way with such people, the others lost their heads, said their last hour had come, and that they would be eaten by tigers in the forest; nothing we could do would persuade them to make an effort. The unfortunate man, who was by this time dangerously ill, kept up a long wail and asked us not to leave him on the road; as if we should think of doing such a thing! There was only one means of saving his life, and that was to get him into camp somehow; so we removed our small stock of food, placed it on the head of the only available man, and putting the sick man inside, my brother and I carried the hammock and finished the journey. Our shoulders were peeled and our backs ached for days afterwards, but we brought him in safely.

In 1886 I took fifteen elephants with me, and spent a week's leave shooting near Dhunsiri Mukh. The first morning I was stalking a swamp deer in low grass, when I came on a bull buffalo 60 yards away and quite unconscious of my presence. I had left my 8-bore on the elephant about 100 yards away, but hoped to kill him with my trusty .500 express. Unfortunately he was facing me with his head low, and I hit him with both bullets in the face. He made straight for me, and I ran through the tunnels formed by wild beasts in the dense grass, with the buff in chase. I flung myself into the grass and lay still. He came to within a few feet of me, and suddenly stopped dead. I could hear my heart beating, and wondered if he would scent me, but his head was covered with blood, and he must have been almost blinded. He gave two or three snorts, dashed away

The Romance of Soldiering and Sport

to his left and again pulled up; he was undoubtedly searching for me. As soon as he had started I made tracks in the direction of the howdah which I could see towering above the jungle. I yelled to the mahout to make the elephant sit down, and leaping as I never did before just managed to crawl into the seat. None too soon! For the buff was almost on us, and as "Maggie" faced round to meet him he caught her a terrific blow on the side. Holding on with my left hand, I got off both barrels with the right, and though the buffalo still stood up he was paralysed, and I gave him a final bullet in the neck which killed him.

I believe nowadays in Assam a sportsman is rarely allowed to kill a rhino, but during this trip I came across no fewer than seven rhino in one day, one of which was standing in a pool, and I mistook him for a dead tree until I was close up. On another occasion I came on a rhinoceros in the open. Firing two barrels at his head, I was delighted to see him sink on his knees, as I imagined to rise no more; but the mahout lost his head and turned sharp round, and when I looked again, to my surprise, the rhino had vanished. However, I followed his tracks. For two or three hours I kept on the blood trails, but when darkness set in I had to give it up. As I turned towards my camp I felt desperately disappointed, but determined to be after him at dawn next morning.

Before daylight I had started, and about nine o'clock saw tracks of fresh blood; I had not proceeded far when I heard a moaning noise on the right, and halted the elephant. Whilst listening I was startled by the roar of a tiger, followed again by the same moan I had first heard, and then a succession of growls. We moved on 150 yards, when I could see the top of the high grass about 50 yards ahead swaying as if shaken by some big beast. Again we halted, but when I once more motioned the mahout to advance, he absolutely refused to do so. Minutes passed, and still the noise continued, and I perceived that the beast, or beasts, whatever they might be, evidently had no idea of our presence. Eventually yielding to alternate coaxing and threats, the mahout gave a cry of "Allah!" and my tusker,

Assam and the Sudan

"Payne," who was quite as excited by this time as I was, rushed forward with a trumpet, and in another instant we were within 10 yards of the turmoil. There, in a beaten-down space of some 15 square yards, was a rhino, covered with blood, and engaged in deadly combat with two tigers, who were endeavouring to kill him.

It was all the work of a few seconds, but I can still see them all three. One tiger had his neck fearfully lacerated, evidently by the rhino's teeth; the other was also covered with blood, and the rhino himself was dreadfully mangled. It was a gruesome sight, and even the elephant stood stock still as if admiring the struggle. Bringing the rifle to my shoulder, I fired the right barrel at the tiger on my right, just grazing his neck, and as I did so the other sprang past my elephant; he could only have been five yards from me, but I grieve to own that I missed him clean. I was very excited, and, sad to say, had missed or lost both tigers, and just when they seemed in my clutches. However, there was my rhino to be tackled, and although he had already had a hard fussle for life, he was game to the end, and, springing to his feet, prepared to charge me. A bullet in his head finished his existence.

I returned to Golaghat on an elephant, straight through the jungles. It is the best way to enjoy the holy calm of the primeval forests; you move so quietly; no footfall is heard; and you are so well raised above everything that you not only get a long view, but at any moment may come on wild animals, who will seldom run if they are accustomed to seeing wild elephants in their haunts. Nothing alters the course you are steering; at one moment you force your way through almost impenetrable creepers and undergrowth, then down a dangerous-looking bank, and at the bottom of it you plunge into deep water; then the opposite bank must be climbed, and the huge beast gets up it somehow. It is nervous work at first, but one soon gets to know the power of an elephant to overcome almost any obstacle. Meantime you are comfortably seated, and can understand the words of the Psalmist, "Wonderful are Thy works." Yes, won-



"THE LURE OF THE JUNGLE"